



Validation of Informal Learning in European Projects

VIP Newsletter

December 2010

In European projects, networks and partnerships stakeholders from different countries gather under a multinational umbrella to develop new approaches, products and services. In this context it is unquestionable that the collaboration in international teams, in contrast to national teams, requires not only considerably stronger efforts in terms of resources but also preparedness to interact with people from different professional, social and cultural backgrounds. Thus, European collaborative projects and partnerships are informal learning spaces for the European partners.

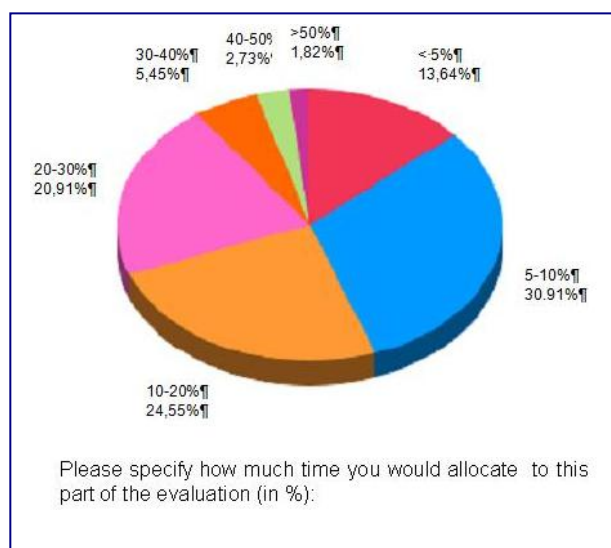
In this context VIP seeks to assess and evidence the competence development of team members working in European projects and wants to improve the visibility of informal learning that takes place in collaborative European projects, networks and partnerships.

VIP European Survey

As announced in our October newsletter VIP launched a European survey among European Grundtvig partners and coordinators. The aim of the survey was to substantiate the findings of our comprehensive desk research on different approaches and instruments for validating informal learning and to investigate the awareness about the issue and the demand of evaluation in regard to competence development in European projects and partnerships. In the VIP context, with validation we mean the process of assessing and evidencing learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and/or competences) acquired by an individual in an informal setting. The survey was based on an online questionnaire and a range of expert interviews.

All in all 198 respondents completed the online survey. Results clearly show that a vast majority of European project team members have never evaluated individual competence developed in European projects but would be ready to dedicate up to 30-40% (see graph) of the project evaluation to the assessment of individual learning and competence development within the partnership. The mode of competence evaluation would be preferably a combination of self-evaluation and external support (65%).

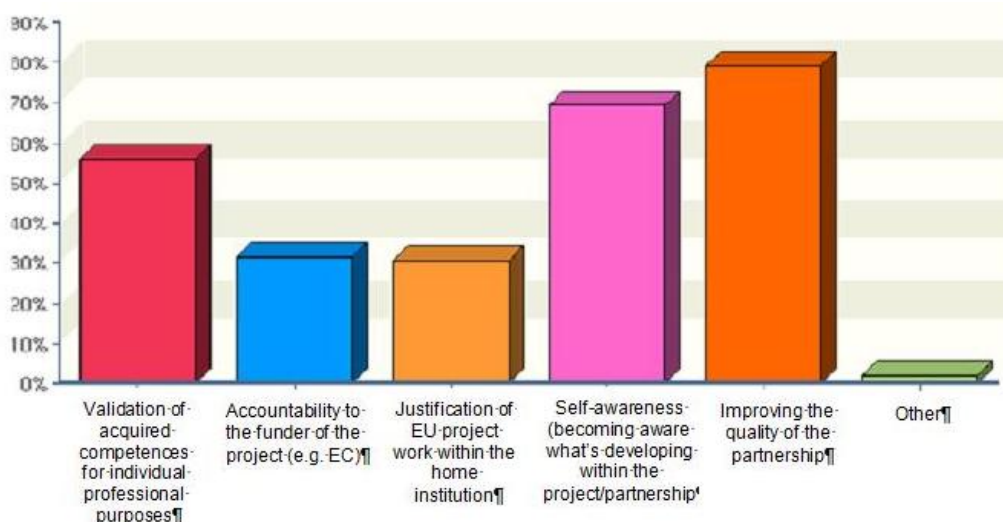
Almost 90% of respondents would be interested to use a tool for assessing competence development in European education projects.





As far as the main motivation for such an assessment among partners and coordinators is concerned, 88% of respondents declared to be above all interested in achieving an improvement of the quality of the European partnership and still 70% would be interested to become more aware of the processes in the partnership. Validation for professional purposes is only ranked on the third place.

Reasons for assessment:



Among the identified competence areas for successfully working in European project or partnerships are: effective communication in different project situations, leadership, diversity management, project management, facilitation, empathy, networking, reflection and evaluation, ICT, PR, team work and advocacy.

The VIP-partnership has developed reference systems for the assessment of these competences. More information on the reference systems and their application will be given in the next newsletter that is going to be published spring 2011.

VIP in Paris



In answer to our November newsletter, VIP was invited to the 10th anniversary of Grundtvig organised in Paris by the National Agency in France. The German partner BUPNET followed the invitation and took the opportunity to present the project and its activities carried out in year 1 as well as the prospective for year 2. Among the audience were representatives of the AFPEJA, French Agency of the European Youth Programme in Europe, CEMEA, national movement for new education, Ministry of Culture and Communication, Ministry of Education, EUCEN, Ministry of Work, Ville de Paris, FNARS, national federation of associations for social reinsertion and the European Commission.



We had intensive and most interesting discussions with the French experts, created new ideas, developed impulses and came back with a bunch of new potential partners for our project and approach to validate informal learning in European projects and partnerships.

In the course of the discussions it became increasingly obvious that different countries make different use of the term “Validation of Informal Learning” and that there is a great uncertainty about concepts and objectives of different approaches – be it

- the evaluation of informal learning or
- the recognition of competences acquired in informal contexts.








Grundtvig actions are aiming at developing learners’ competences in a vast scope of different settings, contexts following different aims and addressing different target groups from highly professional educational staff to disadvantaged persons.

Hence we believe that in most of the Grundtvig settings (incl. partner learning activities) the focus is on the *evaluation of development* of competences rather than on their recognition.

As far as the preferences of Grundtvig project coordinators and partners in regard to informal learning are concerned the survey carried out in VIP clearly points in the same direction:

The majority of the respondents focus on the improvement of the (learning) processes within the partnership and only in the third place on the validation of learning outcomes for professional reasons.

The VIP-Partnership

-  University of Kassel, Kassel, Germany
-  BUPNET GmbH, Bildung und Projekt Netzwerk, Göttingen, Germany
-  “die Berater” Unternehmensberatungsgesellschaft mbH, Vienna, Austria
-  Landcommanderij Alden Biesen, Belgium
-  Belies Consulting S.L., Barcelona, Spain
-  Romanian Institute for Adult Education IREA, Timisoara, Romania
-  CVNO, Education Center for Non-profit Organisations, Banská Bystrica Slovakia

VIP is a project that works in the framework of the REVEAL, the Research and Evaluation group for Validating, Evidencing and Assessing informal and non-formal Learning.

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